

Thomas Announces New Plant in N.C. for School Bus Production

HIGH POINT, N.C., June 3 /PRNewswire/ -- Thomas Built Buses announced today its plan to invest \$39.7 million to build a new school bus manufacturing plant in High Point, NC. Freightliner LLC management approved the plan pending finalization of incentives proposals offered by state and local authorities. When complete in early 2004, the plant will be the company's state-of-the-art center for building conventional-style school buses.

"We're building this new school bus plant to bring the latest manufacturing technology and processes to our school bus products and our customers throughout North America," said John Thomas III, president of Thomas Built Buses. "We intend to continue to pioneer advances in school bus design and assembly that will enhance the safety of children and the efficiency of school bus transportation. This new plant is a cornerstone of our commitment to continue to lead this industry with innovation and highly competitive buses."

"Support for this project from the state of North Carolina, the city of High Point, the city of Archdale, as well as Randolph and Guilford Counties is a deciding factor in our decision on the plant's location," Thomas added. "Together we will invest in this community and continue to manufacture quality school buses right here in High Point."

The new Thomas plant is expected to generate about 178 new jobs in 2004. Construction of the 250,000 square foot plant will begin in Fall 2002 on a site on Fairfield Road in High Point that is adjacent to the company's current site for pre-delivery bus inspection and storage.

Founded in 1916 in High Point, Thomas's corporate headquarters and manufacturing plants span more than 850,000 square feet in High Point. The company is a leading employer in Guilford and Randolph counties, with 1,460 full time employees.

Thomas Built Buses is a subsidiary of Freightliner LLC and is the leading manufacturer of school buses in North America, with a 37% share of the conventional school bus market.

Freightliner LLC, headquartered in Portland, Oregon is the largest heavy-duty truck manufacturer in North America and a leading manufacturer of Class 3-7 vehicles. Freightliner produces and markets commercial vehicles under the Freightliner, Sterling, Western Star, American LaFrance, and Thomas Built Buses nameplates. Freightliner is a DaimlerChrysler Company, the world's leading commercial vehicle manufacturer.

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